



**THE OFFICE OF
STATE TREASURER
DENISE L. NAPIER**

NEWS

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Media Contacts:

Gary Griffin
Adams & Knight
Gary@adamsknight.com
Phone: (860) 676-2300 ext. 131
Cell: (860) 748-9486

Lisa Monroe
State of Connecticut
Treasurer's Office
lisa.monroe@ct.gov
Phone: (860) 702-3014

CHET Dream Big! Competition Winners Announced *Creative Contest Challenged Kids to Change the World after College*

HARTFORD, Conn. – June 4, 2009 – Connecticut State Treasurer Denise L. Nappier is proud to announce three overall statewide winners and 20 county winners of the CHET Dream Big! Competition. Sponsored by the State Treasurer's Office and the Connecticut Higher Education Trust (CHET), the CHET Dream Big! Competition is a drawing, poetry and essay contest for students in grades Kindergarten (K) through six (6). CHET is the state's 529 college savings plan. Treasurer Nappier, who serves as trustee for CHET, hosted the official award ceremony held on May 27, 2009 at Goodwin College in East Hartford.



The three statewide winners are Sarah Michelle Viele of Naugatuck-(Grade 3, drawing); Emily Coderre of Waterford-(Grade 4, essay); and Kayleigh Fowler of Wallingford-(Grade 6, poem). Their winning entries, along with the entries of the 17 other county winners, are currently on display at <http://www.chetdreambig.com>.

Hena Daniels, WFSB Channel 3 news anchor, was an enthusiastic emcee for the event. Goodwin College President Mark Scheinberg warmly congratulated the students, their schools and their families. But the luminaries of the afternoon clearly were the students.

The three statewide winners were thrilled about their win. "I am so excited! I can't believe I won!" said Sarah Michelle Viele of Naugatuck. "My teacher, Mrs. Orsini, really wanted my whole class to enter, and this goes to show that if you just try, you really can win!"

Emily Coderre of Waterford was happy to win for something she enjoys doing. "This is so exciting. I can't believe I won! Writing is my favorite subject, and it was really fun writing this essay. I want to become a teacher some day and help other children become good writers."

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Kayleigh Fowler of Wallingford won for her poem about her dream to work for the Department of Children and Families. "I was really excited to win the statewide Competition. My step mom works for the DCF and tells me a lot about it. After college, I really want to help people, too."

Featuring more than 1,800 student drawings and creative writing entries submitted from across the state, the contest inspired students to imagine how a college education would help them to change the world for the better, while it motivated parents to think about how to save for that college education to support their children's dreams. "The current economic climate, and the resulting financial strain on families in Connecticut and across our nation, make saving an essential part of family financial planning today," said Treasurer Nappier.

"Promoting opportunities to increase financial education for individuals and families has been a priority of my administration, and will continue to be. Parents and guardians need to be knowledgeable of the potential benefits that investing early can provide to their long term educational goals," Nappier said. She also cited a study by student loan agency NellieMae that found "graduating seniors average more than \$20,000 in tuition loans, combined with credit card debt which students often amass in their efforts to meet college expenses." (Source: www.nelliemae.com, "Undergraduate Students and Credit Cards.") The goal of the CHET Dream Big! Competition is to emphasize to parents and loved ones the importance of having a plan in place as early as possible to help pay for the growing costs of a higher education.

Nappier applauded all of the students who entered the Competition and who, at young ages, are already dreaming about college and their role in making a positive contribution to their communities.

A panel of judges, including writers, poets, artists, representatives from the Treasurer's Office and TIAA-CREF Tuition Financing, Inc., which serves program manager for CHET, selected the competition winners.

Children in grades K through three (3) were asked to draw a picture that portrays the answer to the question, "*What do I want to do after I go to college?*" Fourth (4) and fifth (5) grade students were asked to write an essay explaining, "*How will I change the world after I go to college?*" Sixth (6) grade students answered the same question by penning an original poem.

All prizes were awarded during the official award ceremony. The parents or legal guardians of the 20 county winners received a check for \$250. The parents or legal guardians of the three statewide winners received an additional check for \$500. The teacher or principal of the three statewide winners received a check for \$150 to put towards a classroom celebration.

For more information about CHET, visit www.aboutchet.com; visit www.chetdreambig.com for more information about the CHET Big Dream! Competition and the 2009 winners.

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